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**Reconstructing of Gender Roles in
Orlando by Virginia Woolf**

*An extended essay submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for a
Master's degree in literature and civilisation*

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Dedications

This work is dedicated to my beloved parents, who have always been my pillars of support and encouragement, thank you for believing in me and pushing me to achieve my goals. Your unwavering love and guidance have been invaluable throughout this journey.

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“Dellel Fatima Zahra MORSLI”

Dedications

*I dedicate this work as a proof of respect and gratitude
to my dear parents for their encouragement and their sacrifices that they
endured;*

*To my very dear family and friends and to my pair that I spent
unforgettable moments together;*

*To all people dear to my heart for their help their time their
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Abstract:

This research paper presents an exploration of the representation of gender role in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* and how she reconstructs the essence of gender and transgender as the major way of identification; instead, the act of creation, what individuals send out into the world is most important when it comes to identifying and characterizing one's personality. More specifically, it aims to discuss gender identity and its role when it comes to putting the person within a certain position in his or her society, their importance as to set the stumping ground for people depending on their gender when they're born, or the gender they decide to identify as, and their impact on society once they change the identity of the individual. *Orlando* has attracted a wide range of discussion amongst the feminist critics because of its use of gender representation. The characters may be female or male but the gender matters in frame work of feminist study. Gender is culturally taken into consideration but in any literary creation role of gender establishes its own identity. Both femininity and masculinity are mentioned in this work and one cannot discuss Woolf without mentioning feminism, a theme that is prominent in almost all of her books and articles, fighting for women and equal rights. Virginia Woolf is one of the most ever discussed writers in context of feminist critical theories.

Key words: Gender Identity, Transgender, Femininity, Masculinity, Feminism.

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General Introduction:

General Introduction

The issue of recreating gender roles is central to Virginia Woolf's famous novel *Orlando: a biography*, which provides an in-depth investigation of identity, fluidity, and societal expectations. Woolf's novel, set over centuries and shifting historical epochs, defies typical categorizations, pushing readers to reevaluate their knowledge of gender and its intricacies. This dissertation delves into Woolf's analysis of gender roles in *Orlando*, looking at how the novel breaks conventional standards and creates a narrative that transcends traditional bounds. Virginia Woolf, a modernist literary pioneer and a key voice in feminist debate, was renowned for her unique methods of narration and acute insights into the human mind. Through *Orlando*, Woolf engages on an adventurous narrative experiment, blurring the barriers between reality and fiction, history and imagination. At the center of this narrative experiment is the protagonist Orlando, whose journey of discovering oneself and metamorphosis acts as a lens through which Woolf investigates the fluidity and complexity of gender identity.

This research work begins by locating *Orlando* within Woolf's larger literary work, as well as the early twentieth-century social and intellectual milieu. Examining Woolf's personal writings, critical essays, and other works reveals her boosting feminist consciousness as well as her interest with gender, identity, and representation. This contextual setting provides the foundation for a deeper examination of *Orlando* and its thematic challenges and problems. This research focuses on how Woolf reconstructs gender roles in *Orlando* using diverse narrative tactics, character movement, and thematic elements. This research paper uses detailed textual analysis and literary theory to study important passages and scenes in the novel, assessing Woolf's representation of gender ambiguity, subversion of traditional standards, and critique of patriarchal systems.

In addition, the dissertation delves into critical debates about Woolf's treatment of gender in the novel, examining issues such as fundamentalism versus social constructionism, the role of language and representation in shaping gender identity, and the novel's relevance to contemporary discussions of gender and sexuality. The present research advances this comprehension of Woolf's feminist objective and her lasting impact as a pioneering writer and thinker by critically exploring her reconstruction of gender roles in *Orlando*. Through its novel narrative style and great subject depth, *Orlando* continues to attract readers and

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question established gender assumptions, asking to consider new options for expressing oneself and identity.

The work aims to solve the following questions:

1. How does Virginia Woolf challenge traditional gender role?
2. How does "*Orlando*" represent Virginia Woolf's feminist views?
3. How does Virginia Woolf approach the transgender and feminism theory in her novel *Orlando*?
4. How does the protagonist's gender transition affect their identity and society attitudes in "*Orlando*"?

The research confirms the following hypothesis, which states:

1. In *Orlando*, the author uses unique narrative strategies to challenge conventional assumptions of masculinity and femininity while also examining the flexibility of gender identity. Woolf's character, Orlando, deconstructs binary concepts of gender, urging readers to question the manufactured nature of society conventions and the possibility of individual self-expression and liberty. By blurring gender borders and portraying a protagonist who defies standard bounds, Woolf challenges patriarchal systems and calls for a more inclusive and expanded view of gender and identity.

2. In *Orlando*, Virginia Woolf employs the protagonist's transformation and the novel's experimental narrative techniques to express and attack established gender stereotypes, eventually reflecting her feminist beliefs. Woolf uses the character Orlando to question established gender norms, pushing for gender fluidity and autonomy in identity. Woolf's work explores topics such as power relations, autonomy, and self-expression, presenting a feminist worldview that respects individuality while resisting patriarchal restraints. Through an examination of *Orlando*, Virginia Woolf's feminist beliefs are prominently expressed in her work through the subversion of gender stereotypes, the representation of female autonomy, and the investigation of society norms.

3. Its hypothesis that the main character's process of gender transition acts as a prism from which Woolf engages with transgender and feminist theories, eventually questioning traditional gender definitions and advocating for the fluidity and complexity of identity. Woolf's portrayal of Orlando's transformation from male to female emphasizes the element of

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gender and the construction of societal standards, which is consistent with feminist views that criticize binary gender categorizations. Woolf investigates issues of agency, autonomy, and self-determination via Orlando's experiences and relationships with others, reflecting transgender ideas that highlight the value of individual expression and validation. Finally, Woolf's fusion of transgender and feminist theories in *Orlando* reveals a dynamic, multidimensional, and liberated picture of gender, providing readers with fresh insights into the opportunities that exist.

4. Virginia Woolf's novel *Orlando* depicts how the protagonist's gender change from male to female has a significant influence on their identity and social beliefs. Hypothetically, the change might lead to a complex investigation of identity, defying traditional conventions and gender stereotypes. The protagonist's journey might represent a transition away from strict societal definitions and toward a more fluid sense of self, echoing Woolf's own views on gender and identity. Furthermore, society views may differ, with some characters welcoming the protagonist's transition while others oppose or misinterpret it, reflecting larger issues of acknowledgment, discrimination, and the progression of cultural standards as time passes.

Woolf has historically been viewed as an active feminist. The topic of this study has grown out of personal curiosity about the feminist writer Woolf's androgynous character in her writing. For the past five years, Study women in French and francophone literature and have come to discover a great number of writings by women who adopt a male voice. Although it has been said that the metamorphosis in *Orlando* is an improbable act on Woolf's part, for a woman to take on the life of a man, a main theme in the novel is that it is difficult to categorize male and female and that androgyny is the natural state of humanity. Woolf's close friend and lover Vita Sackville-West, who was the main inspiration for the character of Orlando, was herself one from whom can learn much about gender identity, as she had open affairs with women yet never identified herself as homosexual, dressed in male attire, and as the son and heir of her mother was raised as her mother's expected male heir.

This dissertation is going to examine through the way Virginia Woolf portrays and reconstructs gender roles in *Orlando*. This research paper will use a careful examination of the text to investigate how Woolf challenges established concepts of gender and identity, as well as how she uses narrative strategies to deconstruct and recreate gender roles throughout the novel. This study aims to shed light on Woolf's creative approach to gender representation

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and its implications for modern understandings of identity and equality by diving into the socio-cultural environment of the novel's historical period.

The first chapter introduces the work, reconstructs gender roles in the novel Orlando, discusses the existence of gender and identity, and provide insight into how gender and identity emerge.

The second chapter explores gender identity and roles, as well as transgender femininity and masculinity notions and their comparisons. The third chapter examines the novel Orlando, including the author's history, symbolism, themes, and character development.



Chapter One:

Literature Review:



Chapter One : Literature Review

1.1. Introduction:

In Virginia Woolf's important novel *Orlando: A Biography*, the idea of rebuilding gender roles emerges as a key emphasis, drawing readers into a highly interwoven tale that questions traditional understandings of identity, time, and social expectations. This dissertation delves thoroughly into Woolf's analysis of gender roles in *Orlando*, revealing the complexity of gender formation and representation in the novel.

The first chapter serves as the basis for this research, offering a thorough overview of the thematic landscape and critical framework that will guide this investigation of gender roles in *Orlando*. This chapter establishes the historical and theoretical settings within which Woolf's novel is set, as well as the main themes and approaches that will guide this research. It opens by setting *Orlando* in the larger context of Virginia Woolf's literary corpus and the social environment of the early twentieth century. Through an examination of Woolf's feminist ideas, modernist sensibilities, and literary innovations, get insight into the thematic preoccupations and narrative methods that compose *Orlando*.

This chapter provides a thorough examination of gender roles in *Orlando*, providing the basic for later chapters that will dive into particular thematic, narrative, and character dynamics in Woolf's novel. As wander through the pages of *Orlando*, are ready to unravel the rich fabric of gender construction and representation that Woolf so skillfully creates.

The definitions of literature have evolved over time. Prior to the 18th century, Western Europe's literature encompassed all books and written works. Then, during the romantic period, a narrower definition of the word emerged, emphasizing to the country that 'literature' was imaginative writing. The current discussion on what constitutes literature aligns with previous, inclusive literature. The phrase "oral literature" refers to "the literature of preliterate culture" in non-written works. The usage of literature in this context might be challenging due to its origins in Latin. However, "oral styles" and "oral genres" have been offered as alternatives, the term "literature" remains widely used.

Oral literature is an old human tradition that can be found in "all corners of the world". Modern archaeology has shown evidence of human endeavors across civilizations to preserve and transmit arts and knowledge based fully or partially on oral tradition.

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Literature is defined as any writing about a subject; the body of published work dealing with a certain subject (S. Cylar 83). Pollanen coined a similar definition to this scholar, stating that "literature refers to published writing in a particular style on a specific subject" (Pollanen). Encarta defined literature as the use of well-chosen words to tell a story through narration, involving characters in conflict, or through artfully designed images to convey an emotion or idea (Encarta), and as Cuddon pointed out, "literature is a vague term which usually denotes works which belong to the major genres: epic, drama, lyric, novel, short story" (Cuddon). As for Mukarovsky "literature is a language that draws attention to the mode of expression and thereby goes beyond merely describing or communicating ideas" (Mukarovsky).

Literature aims to entertain and educate readers via imaginative means. Literature may also shock, astonish, or give readers with a temporary get away from their daily lives. This definition, although not include anything, is wide. Scholars struggle to create literature based on a single topic due to the variety of genres available. Many of the definitions that exist today have restrictions. This is due to the diverse and extensive nature of literature. Holistic include multiple concepts such as genres and styles.

1.2. A Brief Biography about Virginia Woolf:

Adeline Virginia Stephen was born on January 25, 1882 in London, England, was a pioneering English writer and a key role in the early twentieth-century modernist literature movement. Woolf was nurtured in an intellectually stimulating atmosphere, since both of her parents were well-known names in Victorian literature, despite losing her mother at a young age and dealing with mental illness throughout her life, Woolf shown extraordinary literary aptitude from her youth. Woolf's writing career began when she joined the Bloomsbury group, a group of artists and intellectuals who challenged Victorian customs and embraced new forms of artistic expression. In 1915, she released her debut novel, "*The Voyage Out*," which was praised for its original narrative technique and psychological complexity.

Woolf wrote some of her best-known works throughout the 1920s and 1930s, including "*Mrs. Dalloway*" (1925), "*To the Lighthouse*" (1927), and "*Orlando: A Biography*" (1928). These works are notable for their experimental storytelling approaches, stream-of-consciousness, narration, and investigation of subjects such as gender, identity, and the nature of existence.

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Virginia Woolf was a well-known English writer throughout the twentieth century. She was well-known for her novels, but she also wrote essays, biographies, correspondence, and diaries. Her writing belonged to the modernist movement, a literary trend that existed between world wars one and two. Woolf utilized a stream-of-consciousness writing style, which is a literary approach that employs a continuous inner monologue to bring characters to life in a realistic manner.

Although her creative brilliance, Woolf suffered from mental health problems throughout her life, including severe spells of depression. Sadly, she died by suicide on March 28, 1941, at the age of 59. Her legacy, as one of the most original and influential writers of the twentieth century, lingers on, inspiring generations of readers and writers with her trailblazing work.

1.3. Overview of *Orlando*:

Virginia Woolf wrote the novel *Orlando: A Biography*, which was originally published in 1928. It follows the eponymous character, Orlando, a young aristocrat in Elizabethan England who lives for more than three centuries and endures a remarkable metamorphosis from male to female. The novel covers many historical periods, from the Elizabethan era to the current day (when it was written), and examines issues of gender identity, temporality, and creative thought.

At the beginning *Orlando* displayed in the story as a young man living during Queen Elizabethan's reign. He lives a luxurious life as an aristocrat and pursues a variety of romantic and intellectual interests. However, Orlando's life changes dramatically when he awakens one morning to discover that he has turned into a woman. As a woman, Orlando faces the limitations and limits of gender roles throughout history, while also experiencing love, tragedy, and self-discovery.

Orlando is praised for its novel storytelling approach and investigation of problems of gender identity and expression. Woolf's character Orlando questions traditional concepts of masculinity and femininity, emphasizing the flexibility and complexity of gender roles. The work also has meta-fictional aspects, with Woolf speaking directly to the reader and reflecting on the nature of narrative and identity building.

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As a whole, *Orlando* is an important work that defies categorization and continues to engage readers with its examination of gender, time, and the human experience. The novel's beautiful style and inventive storytelling provide a thought-provoking reflection on the nature of identity and the potential for self-discovery.

1.4. Historical Context of *Orlando*:

Orlando first sees Sasha skate on the river Thames during the great frost festival. Throughout history, various great frosts have settled over England and Europe, notably the great frosts of 1683 and 1708; however, Woolf is most likely referring to the great frost of 1608, when the first frost fair was staged in London. In December 1607, a major cold spell hit Great Britain, Europe, and Iceland. Temperatures plunged, killing people and cattle, while the river Thames froze entirely. The shore of the North Sea also froze, halting all commerce and business for more than three months. Ships were stuck in the harbor, and massive icebergs floated out to sea, exactly as Woolf described.

Frost festivals allowed merchants and enterprises to recoup some of their cold-related income losses, and Londoners took to the frozen Thames River for sledding, ice skating, and carnival games. Frost fairs were normally just a few days long, but they did not begin to close until the ice began to thaw, trapping people and attractions on the river. The ice melted quickly, frequently in less than a day, and it resulted in numerous deaths throughout the ages. The greatest frost fair is supposed to have taken place during the great frost of 1683, one of England's coldest winters on record, while the final frost fair was conducted during the great frost of 1814. After the penultimate frost fair in 1814, the Thames River did not freeze over again until 1963, and has not since.

1.5. Reconstructing of Gender Roles during 20th century:

The early twentieth century marked a considerable shift in society perceptions regarding gender roles, and literature from the time reflects these developments. This review analyzes how gender roles were portrayed in literature throughout this time period, focusing on conventional conventions as well as developing challenges and alternative portrayals.

Many works of literature from the early twentieth century supported traditional gender norms, which often imposed separate responsibilities and expectations for men and women.

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Men were frequently presented as the major breadwinners and leaders, while women were supposed to prioritize domestic tasks, serving as caretakers and homemakers.

The literature generally reinforced conventional Victorian gender ideas, which mandated separate duties and expectations for men and women. Men were frequently presented as breadwinners, leaders, and figures of power, whilst women were relegated to domestic roles and encouraged to emphasize caring and homemaking responsibilities.

1.5.1. Representation of Women:

Female characters in literature during this era frequently represented cultural ideals of woman as meek, maternal, and subservient to men. They were typically portrayed as virtuous and pure, exemplifying values like humility, virginity, and self-sacrifice. Women's roles were frequently confined to supporting male characters or acting as romantic interests.

Female characters in early twentieth-century literature were frequently presented in accordance with existing cultural norms, emphasizing virtues such as purity, humility, and self-sacrifice.

Women were typically consigned to secondary parts, functioning as love interests or foils to male heroes, with minimal agency and freedom.

1.5.2. Exploration of Masculinity:

In addition to representations of women, early twentieth-century literature investigated shifting notions of masculinity. Some works challenged traditional ideals of masculine strength and stoicism, providing more sensitive and introspective depictions of male characters. Writers like James Joyce and D.H. Lawrence presented male heroes struggling with identity, sexuality, and societal expectations.

1.5.3. Feminist Literature:

The early twentieth century witnessed the emergence of feminist writing, which pushed for women's rights and attacked patriarchal norms. Writers such as Virginia Woolf and Charlotte Perkins Gilman wrote on gender inequity, women's suffrage, and the constraints

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imposed by traditional gender roles. Their writings frequently featured strong, independent female protagonists who challenged traditional norms and claimed their own power.

To summarize, the literature of the early twentieth century depicts a period of transition and change in society perceptions regarding gender roles. While conventional conventions remained in many works, there were substantial initiatives to challenge and subvert these norms, laying the way for more varied and inclusive depictions of gender in literature in the decades to come.

1.6. Reconstructing of Gender Roles in *Orlando*:

Virginia Woolf's *Orlando: A Biography* is regarded as a fundamental work in the reconstructing of gender roles in literature. Woolf questions traditional notions of masculinity and femininity via her protagonist Orlando's changing journey, providing a complex analysis of gender identity and expression. This research digs into how Woolf reconstructs gender roles in *Orlando*, focusing on the novel's depiction of gender fluidity, societal expectations, and the transforming power of self-reflection.

According to Christy Burns, Orlando was a pioneer in exploring how society, rather than biology, defines the boundary between 'men' and 'women' (343). The following sentence exemplifies the cultural division between men and women: "We had a word for them." "But we must omit that word because it was disrespectful and strange on a lady's lips." (109-10). Omniscient narrator, rather than Orlando, refers to the deed as "strange on a lady's lips," highlighting how society assigns gender to words. The contrast aligns with Michelle Rosaldo's belief that "women are in some way subordinate to men" (17), particularly in the example of *Orlando*. Women are expected to refrain from using specific terms that are not deemed feminine, leading to subordination.

1.6.1. Fluidity of Gender Identity:

Woolf uses *Orlando's* flexibility in gender and sex to devalue these dimensions of identity. The devaluation is visible in *Orlando's* transition into a woman's physique; his bodily sex has altered. Almost three pages are dedicated to the events leading up to the awakening, emphasizing the significance of this transformation. Woolf's characterization of Orlando's transition from male to female serves as a focal point for the reconstructing of gender roles.

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As *Orlando* awakens, he "stretches himself" he rose. He stood standing in utter nakedness before us, and as the trumpets rang out truth! Truth! Truth! We have no choice left but confess – he was a woman" (97). Woolf questions the idea of permanent gender identities by emphasizing the flexibility and complexity of gender via *Orlando's* experiences.

1.6.2. Representation of Femininity and Masculinity:

Gender role beliefs influence behavior and self-identity. Woolf refutes this belief by making the sex transition commonplace. The usage of "their" when referring to a single individual suggests that identification is not based on gender or sexual orientation. Gender identity influences how one expresses them-selves, whether masculine or feminine. González believes that using the plural term "their" implies *Orlando's* loss of "individuality" (78). Another counterargument is utilizing one's sex to define one's character. Jones says that *Orlando's* "sex exchanges" serve largely as a "mask," a curtain over his actual personality that Woolf incorporated into his artistic expression (155). Woolf's portrayal of *Orlando's* transition from male to female emphasizes the importance of character traits above gender. Woolf breaks the barriers between standard gender norms, creating characters who resist easy categorization and embody a wide range of gender identities.

In addition to the changing of *Orlando's* sex, Woolf also challenges the fundamental concept of gender and sex in the following passage:

I shall never be able to crack a man over the head, or tell him he lies in his
Teeth, or draw my sword and run him through the body, or sit among my peers,
Or wear a coronet, or walk in procession, or sentence a man to death, or lead an army ...
here it would seem from some ambiguity in her terms that she was
Censuring both sexes equally, as if she belonged to neither; and indeed, for the
Time being, she seemed to vacillate; she was man; she was woman; she knew
The secrets, shared the weakness of each. (113)

Virginia stands out as a groundbreaking work that reimagines gender roles and provides a visionary examination of identity and self-expression. The novel's character and Woolf's creative storytelling tactics question society conventions and expectations, pushing readers to reassess their understanding of gender and identity in fundamental and transformational ways.

1.7. Virginia's Use of the Term Gender on Her Other Works:

Virginia Woolf's investigation of gender is a continuous issue throughout her writings, where she frequently questions established assumptions of gender roles and identity. While Woolf's application of the term "gender" varies throughout her work, her writings continuously question conventional gender norms and provide startling insights into the intricacies of human identity and society. Here are some instances of how Woolf used the term "gender" in her previous works.

1.7.1. *A Room of One's Own* (1929):

Woolf's seminal feminist essay examines the need of economic independence and creative freedom for women. While Woolf does not use the concept of "gender" much in this work, she carefully examines how gender stereotypes have historically hampered women's access to education, literature, and professional opportunities.

1.7.2. *The Guineas* (1938):

Like to "A Room of One's Own", "Three guineas" addresses gender, power, and social justice. Woolf challenges military and patriarchal structures of fostering violence and injustice. She advocates for women's rights and emphasizes the significance of collective action in combating systemic differences.

1.7.3. *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925):

Woolf's novel "Mrs. Dalloway" depicts a variety of characters that battle with issues of identity, sexuality, and society obligations. Woolf explores how gender roles influence human experiences and relationships via the characters Clarissa Dalloway and others as well.

1.8. Choice of Genre on Exploring Gender:

The genre chosen in literature is critical in expressing and exploring the complexities of gender, since it has a considerable impact on how readers articulate, question, and understand gender concerns. Genre serves not just as a container for narrative and thematic material, but also as a prism through which gender identities, roles, and relationships are defined and

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interpreted. when evaluating gender representation, the genre chosen—whether fiction, poetry, theater, or nonfiction—has a significant influence on the depth, style, and viewpoint of gender inquiry. The choice of genre is critical in gender representation, with each genre providing unique approaches and chances for examining gender identity, roles, and relationships. Whether via the creative realms of fiction and poetry, the space of drama, or the introspective and analytical domain of nonfiction, literature is a dynamic and powerful vehicle for investigating, celebrating, and redefining gender across the human experience.

1.8.1. Fiction:

Fiction, with its subgenres such as novels and short tales, provides a large canvas for the representation of gender. It allows for a thorough examination of character development, internal ideas, and the social factors that shape gender identity and relationships. Fictional tales allow authors to create complex worlds in which gender may be represented in a variety of ways, including questioning established roles, creating alternate realities, and offering insight into personal and societal gender conflicts. For example, speculative fiction, a subgenre, frequently uses future or magical settings to examine and rethink gender norms and binaries, making it an effective tool for criticizing existing gender beliefs and suggesting alternative ways of understanding gender identity.

1.8.2. Poetry:

Poetry provides a unique way of studying gender, distinguished by its brevity, intensity, and use of metaphorical language. Poets use form, rhythm, and imagery to convey the core of gender experiences, feelings, and criticism. Poetry's lyrical character allows it to portray the complexity and subtleties of gender identity and expression in a brief yet meaningful way, highlighting the ineffable qualities of gendered existence. Poetry invites readers to sense and intuit gendered realities, exploring the spaces between words and meanings to reveal deeper truths about human identity.

1.8.3. Drama and Plays:

Put the artistic component of gender to the center, emphasizing how gender roles are practiced and negotiated in social contexts. The theatrical environment, which includes conversation, action, and visual aspects, reflects real-world gender performance, providing

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insights into the formation and deconstruction of gender identities. Drama offers a unique opportunity to analyze and mock conventional gender standards, using irony and parody to reveal and question the character of expectations based on gender.

1.9. Conclusion:

To conclude, chapter one established a solid framework for this examination of gender roles in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*. Created the stage for a comprehensive investigation of how gender is produced, depicted, and challenged in the novel by delving into Woolf's literary corpus, historical context, critical disputes, and frameworks of theory.

As it advances from this study, chapter one provides the groundwork for a thorough discussion of gender roles in *Orlando*, offering a critical framework and theoretical lens through which to investigate the novel's thematic, narrative, and character dynamics. By building on the concepts and perspectives offered in this chapter, it may begin to unravel the complicated tapestry of gender construction and representation that Woolf so expertly constructs in *Orlando*.

In the next chapters, it will explore further into the novel's particular thematic, narrative, and character features, examining how Woolf's reconstruction of gender roles adds to larger conversation in gender studies, feminist theory, and literary criticism. Through this careful research, it shed fresh light on Woolf's examination of gender and identity, highlighting the novel's lasting relevance and significance in contemporary conversation.



Chapter Two:

Gender Issues

Chapter Two : Gender Issues

2.1. Introduction:

This chapter, look at how Woolf's novel challenges traditional notions of masculinity and femininity, providing a complex depiction of gender fluidity and metamorphosis. It will examine important passages and character development to determine the relevance of *Orlando's* journey as a metaphor for greater social developments in knowing and experiencing gender. It will begin by situating Woolf's investigation of gender within the novel's historical and social framework, focusing on the patriarchal institutions and gender standards present throughout the Elizabethan age and beyond. This historical context will provide light on the limits that people like *Orlando* experience as they navigate a world dominated by traditional gender standards. Then we'll look at *Orlando's* transformation from male to female and how it affects their identity and sense of self. It is going to examine how Woolf depicts *Orlando's* experiences of homophobia, self-discovery, and empowerment via a careful reading of selected sequences, prompting readers to reconsider traditional understandings of gender identity and representation.

The chapter will also investigate the function of performance and effectiveness in constructing gender roles, using theories from gender studies and queer theory to shed light on Woolf's subversive storytelling methods. It will investigate how Woolf destabilizes the binary of female and masculine, feminine, transgender and gender identity by analyzing *Orlando's* relationships with other characters and their developing expression of gender.

2.2. Gender:

Is a person's personal and unique perception of gender roles. It is a person's perception of being a woman, a man, both, neither, or anywhere on the gender spectrum. A person's gender identification may or may not correspond to their biological gender.

Since the late twentieth century, psychologists, philosophers, and social activists have debated the nature and evolution of gender identity. So-called essentialists believe that gender identity is determined at birth by genetic or other biological reasons. Social constructivists contend that gender identity, or how it is represented, is "socially constructed"—that is, influenced by social and cultural factors. The second sort of social constructivism is not naturally at odds with essentialism, because a supposedly underlying gender identity can be represented in different ways across cultures. Finally, a kind of social constructivism, maintains that gender identity is produced rather than conveyed by the ongoing

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"performance" of gendered behavior (actions and words). According to the American philosopher Judith Butler, the creator of this viewpoint in his book *gender trouble*, gender "is constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (chapter 1).

2.2.1. Gender as a Theory:

A variety of gender theories have been offered to explain transgender people's experiences. In addition to sex and gender, gender identity and gender expression are particularly important notions in such theories. Gender identity is a person's self-identification as male, female, or something in between or outside of those categories. Gender expression refers to how one exhibits one's gender identification, for as by using certain pronouns, wearing specific attire, or having a specific hairdo. Gender identity is private, whereas gender expression is open to the public.

The three primary theories of gender are essentialism, social constructionism, and performativity. Essentialists emphasize biological traits, claiming that a person's gender identity is determined at birth, regardless of whether it matches to their biological sex. Essentialism thus rejects the notion that gender identity is totally socially constructed—that is, a consequence of social or cultural forces. According to essentialists, the fundamental instance in need of explanation is that of people who claim to have always felt (for as long as they can remember) that they belonged to the opposite sex to the one given to them at birth. Such feelings are common among transsexuals, who feel compelled to change their sex to fit the gender identity they believe they have always experienced.

Constructionists argue that the qualities and behaviors typically associated with the male or female sex have changed over time and between cultures, whereas gender would be intrinsic. It is important to note that essentialism and social constructivism, as defined in this article, are not necessarily incompatible insofar as they aim to explain different (though obviously related) things: one concerns the supposed biological origin of gender identity (one's self-identification as male or female), while the other concerns the supposed social or societal origin of gender (the traits and behaviors that comprise the masculine or feminine). It is certainly plausible that the former is natural while the latter was mainly, if not totally, learnt in the broadest meaning of being ingrained.

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2.3. Gender Identity in the Novel *Orlando*:

In Virginia Woolf's Novel *Orlando: a biography*, gender identity is essential and multi-dimensional. Woolf's examination of gender identity in *Orlando* is revolutionary for its time, since it questions standard binary concepts of gender and gives a profoundly complex representation of gender fluidity and development. In Virginia Woolf's novel *Orlando* is a groundbreaking novel in its complex and innovative presentation of gender identity, forcing readers to reassess their preconceived beliefs about gender and identity while praising the depth and variety of the human experience.

The most memorable aspects of *Orlando* are the protagonist's remarkable metamorphosis from a young aristocrat to a lady. This metamorphosis occurs midway through the narrative, and *Orlando* lives as both a man and a woman for several centuries. Woolf's portrayal of *Orlando*'s gender metamorphosis illustrates her focus in the fluidity and diversity of gender identity, emphasizing how gender is not set or unchanging but may alter and evolve. *Orlando*'s experiences as a man and a woman, Woolf investigates the societal creation of masculinity and femininity, as well as how these gender roles are practiced and maintained. *Orlando*'s exploration of gendered expectations and conventions reveals the limitations and paradoxes of established gender roles, as well as the freeing potential of transcending them entirely.

In the novel, Woolf stresses character of gender identity, arguing that gender is a social construct enacted and embodied via performance rather than an innate quality. *Orlando*'s gender performance—as both a man and a woman—emphasizes the artificiality of gender standards and how individuals are limited by cultural expectations of gender expression and conduct. *Orlando* is distinguished by its fluidity and ambiguity, especially in terms of gender identification. Woolf blurs the distinctions between masculine and female, truth and imagination, past and present, challenging readers to challenge standard binaries and classifications. *Orlando*'s gender identification is shown as varied and ever-changing, challenging simplistic classification and urging viewers to contemplate the nuances of human identity beyond gender standards.

Furthermore, to its investigation of gender identity inside the narrative, *Orlando* has meta-fictional aspects that reflect on the act of writing and storytelling. Woolf's decision to

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describe *Orlando's* gender transition in a whimsical and entertaining manner highlights the limits of language and representation in conveying the fluidity and diversity of human experience, especially gender identity.

2.4. Transgender:

Transgender (or Trans) is a catch-all term for persons whose gender differs from what they were assigned at birth. This includes the two types of Trans people (Trans men and trans women) and non-binary trans people, who can employ terminology like gender-queer, bi-gender, a-gender, or gender-fluid (though not all non-binary people use trans as a descriptor; see the gender variety articles for more information). In its early and restricted understanding, transgender referred to men and females who identified as female or male. In a later and broader meaning, it has come to describe to persons whose gender identities include behaviors and attributes typically associated with a different gender who opt not to undergo sex transformation.

Transgender people can include transsexuals, transgenderists (people who identify as surgery or hormone treatments), and Androgynes (people who are biologically or psychologically androgynous), among other groups. In a larger sense, transgender is closely connected to the more contemporary word gender-queer, which is self-applied by people who are either transgender or have no gender, a third gender (neither male nor female), or a changing gender.

In its initial and limited understanding, transgender pertained to males and females who identify as females or males. In a later and broader definition, it has evolved to refer to people whose gender identities include behaviors and characteristics normally the opposite sex but choose not to have sex-reassignment associated with the opposite sex.

Transgender people can include transsexuals, transgenderists (people who identify as trans gender people have a gender identification that differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. Gender identity is an individual's internal perception of their own gender, which may contain elements of masculinity, femininity, or other gender manifestations.

Some transgender people may go through a transition to align their physical appearance and/or social position with their gender identification. This process may include hormone medication, surgical procedures, name and pronoun modifications, and other actions to confirm their gender identification. Gender inequality manifests in a variety of ways and can

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be relieved with gender-affirming therapies. Transgender identity is multifaceted, encompassing a vast range of experiences, identities, and manifestations. Transgender persons can identify as transgender, transsexual, non-binary, gender-queer, gender-fluid, or any other identity that reflects their own observations and comprehension of gender. Transgender people self-identified gender identities must be recognized and respected, as well as their freedom to live truthfully and without prejudice. There are many scholars they talk about this concept such as Susan Stryker is a transgender historian, filmmaker, and author renowned for her pioneering work in transgender studies. She has written extensively about transgender history, activism, and identity, and her contributions have helped shape the area of transgender research and sandy stone is a transgender theorist, scholar, and musician who has made significant contributions to transgender studies and queer theory. Her essay "the empire strikes back: a post transsexual manifesto" is recognized as a landmark contribution in transgender thought.

Transgender rights and visibility have emerged as prominent themes of conversation and activism in recent years, as society strives for greater acceptance and inclusion of transgender people.

2.4.1. Transgender in *Orlando*:

In Virginia Woolf's novel *Orlando: A Biography*, the main character suffers a substantial metamorphosis that might be read as mirroring parts of transgender experience, even though the text predates the present vocabulary and understanding of transgender identity. *Orlando* tells the story of a young nobleman who switches between being a man and a woman over the course of several centuries. In the middle of the story, *Orlando* has a shocking and unexpected transformation, waking up one morning to find that he has turned into a woman. Instead of explaining or justifying this change, the tale portrays it as a supernatural and miraculous event. Although the novel does not directly explore gender identity or transgender experience in the same way that contemporary literature does, *Orlando*'s transformation might be viewed as a metaphor for gender fluidity and the fluidity of identity in general. Orlando's adventures as a man and a woman bring into question established ideas of gender roles, emphasizing freedom and issues related with gender identity.

Orlando's addressing gendered expectations and social roles—both as a man and as a woman—reveals how societal standards influence and limit how individuals interact with

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gender. The novel's fun and inventive study of gender highlights the artificiality of gender classifications, inviting readers to reconsider standard binaries and preconceptions about identity. While *Orlando* does not directly address transgender identity in the same manner that current literature does, its depiction of gender transition and fluidity is nonetheless pertinent to conversations about gender identity and provides a deep and nuanced examination of the complexity of human experience.

2.5. Feminism:

Feminism is a broad and dynamic sociopolitical movement and ideology that advocates for gender equality, women's rights, and the elimination of oppressive gender norms and structures. Feminism seeks to address and solve gender-based disparities, with the goal of building a more just and equitable society for people of all genders. This concept encompasses a variety of perspectives and approaches, including liberal feminism, which focuses on legal and policy reforms to achieve gender equality, and radical feminist theory, which seeks to dismantle existing power structures and establish alternative systems of governance and organizational structure in society. Feminist ideas and activity are always evolving and adapting to meet new problems and possibilities in the quest of gender justice and emancipation. Feminism promotes equal rights, opportunity, and treatment for persons of all genders. It acknowledges that gender discrimination and oppression disproportionately harm women and marginalized groups, and it aims to overcome these disparities via legal, social, and cultural improvements. It is based on the acceptance of women's human rights. Feminist groups have long advocated for women's suffrage, reproductive rights, equal access to education and healthcare, economic equality, and the elimination of gender.

It's considered as an intellectual framework and a social-change campaign. Feminist activism may take many forms, including grassroots organizing, policy lobbying, community education, protest, art, and media representation. Feminist activists seek to raise awareness of gender disparities, gather support for policy reform, and promote collective action and unity between feminists and allies.

During the years, countless scholars have contributed to feminist theory and activity, changing the conversation and broadening to understanding of gender, power, and inequality. Some notable feminist scholars and theorists include Simone de Beauvoir, who is best known for her key work "the second sex," where she investigated the social construction of gender

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and how women suffer from marginalization and oppression in a patriarchal culture. She famously declared, "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman," underlining the importance of socialization in determining gender identity and Angela Davis that is well-known for her scholarship and research on race, class, and feminism, as well as her involvement in the civil rights and black liberation movements. Her work, which includes "women, race, & class"(1981) and "freedom is a constant struggle," focuses on the interconnections of gender, racism, and capitalism in oppressive institutions and investigates the historical struggles of women of color and their contributions to feminist movements.

2.5.1. Feminism in *Orlando* :

Feminism in *Orlando* includes a variety of topics and features from Virginia Woolf's work. While the term "feminism" as it is known today may not have been officially stated at the time of the novel's release in 1928, Woolf's work is regarded strongly feminist owing to its investigation of gender, identity, and societal limits. Throughout the novel, the author questions established gender conventions and expectations, notably via the figure of *Orlando*, who defies stereotypes and lives as both a man and a woman. *Orlando* is considered as a feminist work that questions traditional conventions and views about gender, identity, and power. Woolf's work, which explores gender fluidity, female empowerment, and the value of representation, continues to connect with modern feminist debate and provides significant insights into the continuing battle for gender equality and liberty.

So, this quote from the novel emphasizes the concept of gender metamorphosis, which implies that gender is fluid and changing rather than fixed:

"It is probable that the human spirit has a curious predilection for gender metamorphosis". (Woolf, *Orlando*, p50).

"Women have served all these centuries as looking glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size." (Woolf, *Orlando*, p.63). This famous quote from the novel underscores Woolf's assessment of how women are frequently consigned to a secondary function in society, helping to mirror and intensify men's sense of identity and Woolf criticizes patriarchal society and its influence on women's lives, emphasizing how societal standards and expectations diminish and confine women's experiences.

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Despite the cultural restraints imposed on women during *Orlando's* time, Woolf depicts female characters that exert agency and autonomy in their individual realms. From Orlando's independent and adventurous spirit to the strong-willed characters she encounters along the way, the tale honors women who defy stereotypes and follow their own dreams and objectives.

Woolf's methods in *Orlando*, particularly in the closing chapters where *Orlando* becomes a successful writer, can be read as a feminist statement on the value of female writing and representation. By claiming *Orlando's* voice and agency as a writer, Woolf opposes the historical marginalization of women in writing and emphasizes the importance of women's tales and viewpoints. She investigates the complexity of feminine identity and how women negotiate cultural expectations while establishing their own agency and individuality she said in her novel *Orlando*"She... felt herself made on quite a different plan from men... And she sank into profound meditation upon the unsatisfactory nature of her sex." (p. 117). In this passage Woolf expresses *Orlando's* reflection on her own female identity and her awareness of the restrictions imposed by society because of her gender.

Throughout the work, Woolf blurs the distinction between masculine and femininity, implying that ultimate liberty comes from embracing the whole range of human experience. Embracing ambiguity and androgyny, Woolf pushes for a more inclusive and wider conception of gender, one that transcends binary categorizations and allows individuals to completely achieve their potential and that's what it talks about in the next passage in this chapter.

2.6. Masculinity:

Masculinity is a multidimensional notion that includes the social, cultural, psychological, and characteristics typically associated with males and masculinity. It refers to the features, roles, and actions that are culturally considered "masculine" in a certain country or setting. While masculinity differs between cultures and historical times, some characteristics and expectations are frequently connected with the term. Masculinity is frequently associated with society expectations and conventions surrounding the roles and actions considered proper for males. These expectations may include qualities like strength, aggressiveness, independence, and emotional stoicism. Masculinity is frequently connected with duties such as provider, protector, and leader in the family and society. It overlaps with other dimensions of identity, including as ethnicity, class, sexuality, and disability, influencing people's perceptions of

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masculinity in diverse ways, diverse cultural and social circumstances may result in diverse expectations and experiences of masculinity due to overlapping identities and power relations.

Representations of masculinity in popular culture, literature, and media have a profound impact on how people perceive masculinity and comprehend gender roles and identities. These depictions can both reflect and reinforce cultural norms and preconceptions regarding masculinity. In recent years, there has been a greater awareness and critique of conventional views of masculinity, as well as efforts to redefine and broaden the concept of masculinity to make it more inclusive and varied. Pro-feminist masculinity and queer masculinity movements aim to fight the destructive parts of conventional masculinity while also promoting more fair and progressive gender perspectives.

Scholars who study masculinity provide important insights into the complicated processes of gender identity, power, and socialization. Their work frequently examines how masculinity is manufactured, enacted, and experienced in many cultural situations. Raewyn Connell and James W. Messerschmidt's book "*Gender and Power: Society, the Person, and Sexual Politics*" (2005) offers a thorough framework for understanding how power dynamics impact the creation of masculinity. These scholars, among others, have contributed significantly to the understanding of masculinity as a social and cultural phenomenon, and their work continues to shape conversations and debates about gender, power, and social change.

They believe that masculinity is not a static or monolithic concept, but rather a dynamic and disputed landscape molded by interlocking power and privilege networks.

In general, masculinity is a complicated and varied term that is intimately linked to larger social, cultural, and historical processes. Individuals and cultures may work together to develop healthier and more inclusive understandings of gender and identity by critically evaluating and deconstructing conventional masculine concepts.

2.6.1. Masculinity in the Novel:

At the opening of the novel *Orlando* exhibits several characteristics associated with conventional masculinity. As a young aristocrat in Elizabethan England, *Orlando* adheres to traditional standards of manhood, which include qualities like strength, courage, and aggressiveness. He is required to carry out his obligations as a nobleman and follow the norms of conduct specified for individuals of his status. Masculinity is a prominent issue

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portrayed via the experiences of the main character, *Orlando*, as well as larger society views and expectations.

The story depicts *Orlando's* patriarchal culture, in which males wield power and authority while women are frequently consigned to subservient duties. *Orlando's* experiences as a man allow Woolf to investigate the perks and constraints of his gender, as well as how patriarchy influences his worldview and interactions with other people. Woolf stresses the element of gender throughout the work, implying that masculinity, like femininity, is a social construct that is acted out and lived via performance. *Orlando's* portrayal of masculinity is scrutinized and critiqued as he struggles with the demands put on him as a man and attempts to comply cultural conventions.

One of the most startling features of masculinity in *Orlando* is the protagonist's metamorphosis into a woman halfway through the story. This shift calls into question traditional views of masculinity as set and immutable, emphasizing the flexibility and complexity of gender identity. Through *Orlando's* experiences as both a man and a woman, Woolf urges readers to examine the fixed bounds of gender and analyze how gender identity is molded by society expectations and personal experiences.

Woolf defies stereotypes of masculinity by depicting *Orlando* as a multidimensional and emotionally sensitive figure. Despite his apparent strength and confidence, *Orlando* has times of fragility, self-doubt, and contemplation. Woolf highlights *Orlando's* sensitivity and emotional depth, questioning the notion that masculinity is linked with emotional detachment or stoicism.

She also highlights *Orlando's* androgynous characteristics and the uncertainty of his gender presentation. *Orlando's* physical appearance, mannerisms, and conduct defy easy classification, implying that ultimate emancipation requires overcoming strict gender norms. Woolf's investigation of androgyny illustrates her conviction in people's ability to express a broad range of gender identities outside of established conventions.

Orlando is a subtle and thought-provoking examination of masculinity that questions conventional conventions and beliefs while praising the depth and diversity of the human experience. Woolf uses the figure of *Orlando* to challenge readers' beliefs about gender and

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identity, eventually pushing for a more inclusive and expansive interpretation of masculinity and femininity. Woolf's depiction of masculinity in *Orlando* is complicated and multifaceted, questioning traditional gender understandings while also emphasizing how societal expectations impact individual identities. Woolf's journey of self-discovery and change is a thought-provoking investigation of gender identity, power relations, and the pursuit of individual liberty.

2.7. Femininity:

Femininity is a common word. Conversations about being feminine are widespread in everyday life, and the term 'feminine' is used to characterize both oneself and others. They may associate femininity with being a woman who exhibits qualities such as caring, sensitivity, demureness, or sweetness. However, femininity cannot be interpreted as a fixed collection of basic features shared by all women. As an academic notion, femininity can have many different definitions and interpretations. Feminine performances in heterosexual partnerships can follow a variety of scripts. These scripts serve as standards for both personal behavior and social engagement. They are taught at a young age and reinforced throughout life. It's influenced by societal and cultural conventions, expectations, and ideas about how women and feminine people should act, dress, and express themselves.

These standards are communicated through a variety of social institutions, including family, education, media, and religion, shaping people's perceptions of femininity from an early age, is frequently connected with conventional gender norms and expectations that govern women's tasks in society, such as caring, household responsibilities, and emotional labor. These gender roles may be restricting and restrictive because they promote prejudices about women's skills and limit their access to possibilities in fields such as education, work, and management. Femininity is flexible and diverse, embracing a wide range of manifestations and experiences. Individuals can represent femininity in many ways, depending on their personal preferences, cultural background, and social situation. Recognizing the multiplicity of femininity is critical to encouraging inclusion and honoring the breadth of human diversity.

Feminist theories have criticized conventional notions of femininity, claiming that they frequently perpetuate patriarchal power systems while restricting women's autonomy and agency. Feminist movements have worked to challenge restrictive gender norms and provide

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room for different manifestations of femininity, pushing for gender equality, autonomy, and self-determination. Scholars address the study of femininity from several angles, looking at its historical, cultural, psychological, and social aspects. They look at how femininity is defined and formed in various cultural settings, how it interacts with other social categories like race, class, and sexuality, and how it influences people's identities, experiences, and opportunities, sometimes they are focused on critiquing traditional notions of femininity and challenging gender norms that prescribe certain behaviors and roles for women. They may explore how these norms are enforced and perpetuated through institutions, media, and interpersonal interactions, and they may advocate for greater gender equality and social justice. Psychological scholars may examine the psychological processes underpinning femininity, such as gender identity development, self-concept, and interpersonal connections. They may also investigate how cultural messages about femininity affect people's mental health and well-being.

2.8. Conclusion:

At last, Chapter Two delves further into the issue of recreating gender roles in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando: A Biography*. It identified the ways in which Woolf challenges established concepts of gender identity and expression by closely examining important passages and the development of characters.

As it progresses through this examination, Chapter Three will delve deeper into the implications of Woolf's novel for modern understandings of gender, providing insights into Orlando's enduring importance in shaping conversations about gender identity, expression and emancipation. Then it moves to analyzing whole the novel and characters.



Chapter Three:

Analysis of Orlando



Chapter Three: Analysis of the Novel *Orlando*

3.1. Introduction:

Orlando is a fascinating and unique novel that delves profoundly into identity, time, and the essence of artistic expression. In 1928 the novel was published, it narrates the lives and adventures of its title character, *Orlando*, a young nobleman who undergoes a magical transformation that spans ages and gender.

In this research, it will look at the themes, characters, and narrative strategies that distinguish *Orlando* as a significant work of modernist literature. It will examine Woolf's use of stream-of-consciousness narrative telling stories, her critique of gender norms, and her research into the relationship between the personal identity and the expectations of society. The writer investigates identity, love, and the passage of time remains relevant almost a century later, reaffirming *Orlando* as a modern literary work of art.

This introduction provides the stage for a thorough discussion of Virginia Woolf's *Orlando: A Biography*, introducing the themes, problems, and techniques that will be explored in the following analysis.

3.2. Virginia Woolf Biography:

Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) was an important figure in modernist literature, known for her imaginative narrative methods, deep examinations of consciousness, and penetrating observations about the human condition. Woolf was born Adeline Virginia Stephen on January 25, 1882 in London, and she grew up in an intellectually stimulating environment. Her father Sir Leslie Stephen was a well-known author and editor, and her mother Julia Stephan was a philanthropist and model for pre-Raphaelite painters. Woolf's upbringing introduced her to the world of books and ideas at a young age, laying the framework for her professional career as an author.

Her early life was marked by sadness, with the deaths of her mother and half-sister, as well as her own struggles with mental illness. These experiences had a significant influence on her work, adding to the themes of loss, pain, and resilience that run throughout her writing. Woolf met Leonard Woolf, a novelist and political theorist, in 1912, and they would have a lifelong relationship. They founded the Hogarth Press together, which became a well-known publisher of modernist literature as well as a platform for Woolf's own artistic endeavors.

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Virginia's determination to write solidified during the following seven years, as did her appreciation for women. She schooled herself and adored ladies like Madge Vaughan, the daughter of John Addington Symonds, a novelist whom Virginia subsequently portrayed as Sally Seton in *Mrs. Dalloway*. Her appreciation for powerful women was accompanied with a rising disdain for male dominance in society. Virginia's sentiments were most likely influenced by her connection with her stepbrother, George Duckworth, who was fourteen when Virginia was born. In the final year of her life, Virginia wrote to a friend about the embarrassment she felt when George fondled her when she was six. Similar experiences occurred throughout her youth, until Virginia was in her early thirties. Her father died in 1904, shortly after finishing the Dictionary and being knighted. Despite being out of his shadow, Virginia was devastated by the tragedy and had her second mental collapse, which included scarlet fever including a self-harm attempt.

Virginia would spend the next four years working on her first published work, *The Voyage Out* (1915). She accepted Strachey's marriage proposal in 1909, but the engagement was eventually broken off. She got a 2,500-pound legacy the same year, allowing her to live freely. Leonard Woolf, another Bloomsbury Group member, returned from Ceylon in 1911, and they married the following year. Woolf provided Virginia with the stability she required to regulate her emotions and maintain her skill. He made their house a musical environment. Virginia trusted his literary judgment. Their marriage was collaboration, but others believe their sexual relationship was absent.

The author's producing career took off in the early twentieth century, with the release of books including *"Mrs. Dalloway"* (1925), *"To the Lighthouse"* (1927), and *"Orlando: A Biography"* (1928). These works highlighted Woolf's creative storytelling competence, including stream-of-consciousness writing and creative approaches to plotting and developing characters.

Throughout her writing brilliance, Woolf experienced spells of mental illness throughout her lifetime. She committed herself by drowning in the River Ouse near her Sussex home in 1941, when she was 59 years old. Her death was a devastating loss to the literary world, but her legacy lives on via her revolutionary writing and lasting effect on future generations of authors and intellectuals.

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She killed herself in March 1941, leaving suicide notes for her lover and sister before drowning in a nearby river. She thought her craziness was returning and that she would be impossible to continue writing, and she wanted to save her loved ones.

Woolf is viewed now as a key figure in modernist literature, noted for her explorations of consciousness, identity, and the nature of reality. Her works continue to captivate readers with their melodic beauty, psychological comprehensive manner, and rigorous analysis, confirming her reputation as one of the twentieth century's most significant novels.

3.3. Plot Summary:

Virginia Woolf's sixth novel, *Orlando* was published on October 11, 1928. Inspired on Vita Sackville-West's stormy family background, this novel is one of her most popular works. It is a satirical history of English literature, which describes the narrative of a poet who changes gender and lives for centuries, encountering major personalities from English literary history.

The narrative is portrayed from the perspective of a biographer, who is responsible for providing accurate information on *Orlando's* life. *Orlando's* ideas and insights make up a significant chunk of the pseudobiography. Based on Vita Sackville-West's life. Orlando shares West's regard for history and family traditions, as well as his lyrical, brooding personality. In her journal, Virginia Woolf described *Orlando* as:

"Vita, only with a change about from one sex to another."

"To put it in a nutshell...he was a nobleman afflicted with a love of literature...It was the fatal nature of this disease to substitute a phantom for reality." (*Orlando*, p66)

Orlando's narrator, a fictitious biography, hilariously critiques his passion of reading and writing. While many people now see reading as a high and worthwhile endeavor, the biographer compares love of books to an illness that drives one to disconnect from reality and live-in fantasy. Rather than perceiving *Orlando* as educated and well-read, his slaves are concerned about his well-being. According to the biographer, this viewpoint was especially widespread when it came to aristocracy or upper-class individuals, whose lifestyles were so fortunate in actuality. It seemed unusual that someone with such a nice existence would desire to flee from reality.

Chapter Three: Analysis of the Novel *Orlando*

However, it knows that *Orlando's* embarrassments with Sasha and Nick Woolf uses historical settings spanning from the Elizabethan era to the twentieth century to create a tale that simultaneously engages with and satirizes different epochs' cultural conventions. The presence of historical personalities, such as Queen Elizabeth I, not only enriches the story, but also allows Woolf to focus on the influence of power relations on human lives. The novel's satirical characteristics, such as comedy and irony, create a strong critique of the restrictions imposed by gender and class disparities. Woolf's sarcastic vision allows readers to perceive society expectations in a critical and frequently funny light, questioning deeply held ideas about identity and setting. The narrator frequently interrupts the flow of the story in order to speak about events from her point of view. When *Orlando* cheats on Queen Elizabeth with a young girl, the narrator asks the reader to analyze the context of his actions: "It was *Orlando's* fault perhaps; yet after all, are we to blame him? The age was the Elizabethan; their morals were not ours..." (*Orlando* p.24). The age was Elizabethan, and their morals were not ours.

Woolf's creative storytelling addresses add to the rich tapestry of *Orlando*. The stream-of-consciousness writing style immerses readers in the protagonist's changing thoughts and feelings, forging an intimate bond with the character's inner world (Woolf 78). Symbolism, such as the symbolic Oak Tree and the Great Frost, deepens meaning by acting as metaphors for metamorphosis and the lasting quality of some human experiences (BENSTOCK 62). The novel's investigation of the timeless aspects of identity is highlighted by its manipulation of time, which is accomplished through the mingling of real and fictitious components. This historical mobility serves as a metaphor for the malleability of identity itself, transcending the restrictions of each year of age.

Orlando creates as a feminist work, expressing Woolf's ideas and beliefs on women's agency and independence. Female characters in the story, such as Sasha and Archduchess Harriet Griselda, reject social norms and oppose patriarchal restraints (Marcus 314). Through these characters, Woolf creates a feminist discourse that is consistent with her wider beliefs, as expressed in her essay *A Room of One's Own*.

The tale of Woolf's gender-fluid hero involves more than one person. *Orlando's* work, which combines political satire with feminist fantasy, may have foreseen today's cultural context where gender and literary genre borders are increasingly blurred. The character

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explores the limits of desire, curiosity, and knowledge by writing poetry in many styles and spanning decades. *Orlando* despite his wealth, attractiveness, and youth, faces limitations to his independence, illustrating the effects of patriarchy on even the most privileged individuals. Woolf demands the reader to envision what it might be like to escape, yet often reminds them that they are imprisoned. When discussing the prospect of a gender-fluid society or exploring similar concepts in fiction and fantasy, it's important to consider *Orlando's* legacy.

In this work, when one day is portrayed in thirty pages yet entire decades are swept over in a single moment, time appears to be an unreliable measure of experience at the end of the story, *Orlando* realizes that she is not defined by her current circumstances. Through the current time knocks her over the head while she crouches in dread, her pain stems from the fact that she has yet to identify who she is in the present. And *Orlando* discovers that she is a mixture of various identities, events, and timelines. She cannot survive in isolation, just like odors and memories (which remind her of previous experiences). She perceives the interconnectivity of everything. The idea that things or people exist in individual realities is a fallacy. *Orlando* is part of a larger continuum. When the clock strikes twelve, *Orlando* achieves growing up and discovers the interdependent nature of her existence as well.

The novel's open-ended finish and Woolf's deliberate mixing of both reality and fiction support readers to think about *Orlando* using a variety of different points of view. Scholars, feminists, and literary aficionados continue to offer a variety of opinions, extending the novel's legacy and confirming its lasting importance. Her wealthy writing and feminist viewpoints continue to enchant readers, establishing her status as a literary genius whose works transcend chronological and socioeconomic barriers.

3.4. Major Characters:

This novel has a variety of characters; each character plays an important and significant role in this work.

3.4.1. *Orlando*:

The novel's main character, he makes a dramatic change from a young lord in Elizabethan England to a lady in the 18th century. Woolf used *Orlando's* flexible identity to challenge established gender standards and investigate the complexities of self-discovery (Woolf 52). In the beginning, *Orlando* is a young guy from a noble family who dreams of

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traveling the globe and having some experiences. *Orlando's* life is a never-ending search for success, but he has yet to discover long-term contentment. *Orlando* transforms into a woman, allowing her to see the world through both male and female perspectives. *Orlando* ultimately finds a boyfriend, Marmaduke Bonthrop Shelmerdine, who brings her true happiness. She also finds lasting love in nature and literature. Despite *Orlando* has numerous women, his primary loves are nature and poetry, and he spends the most of the novel working on his poem, "The Oak Tree." Since *Orlando* lives for over 400 years, the poem undergoes several modifications in style, vocabulary, and form. *Orlando* has a miraculous transformation into a lady. Despite the seeming extreme shift, *Orlando* is substantially the same guy. In this line, Woolf's character *Orlando* argues that gender, as well as literary forms and customs, are social constructs.

Orlando spends an extensive amount of time and effort trying to adapt to society's concept of a woman and literary critics' idea of a writer, but Woolf claims that truly conforming to either is impossible. Finally, *Orlando* realizes that she is a combination of several identities, and that conforming to any one ideal means denying who she truly is. *Orlando* is also a fictionalized version of Woolf's companion and lover, Vita Sackville-West. Indeed, *Orlando's* life and background are based on Sackville-West's book, *Knole and the Sackville*, which was published in 1922. *Knole and the Sackville* explored Sackville-West's family history and their joint estate, *Knole*. Woolf's inspiration for *Orlando* was never hidden. She gives the book to Sackville-West, who also sat for several of the images of *Orlando* featured in the book. Furthermore, the majority of the paintings in the book featuring *Orlando* and other characters are from Sackville-West's own collection as well as the *Knole* collection. While many of the book's references are presumably personal to Sackville-West and the other members of the Bloomsbury Group, there is a strong comparison between Sackville-West's life and *Orlando's* amazing being.

3.4.2. Sasha:

Sasha a Russian princess and *Orlando's* first love interest, epitomizes mystery and passion they become friends because *Orlando* is one of the few individuals she can communicate with in French. They start a romance that others disapprove on, but Sasha soon becomes bored of *Orlando* and flees with another guy. Her inclusion in the story demonstrates Woolf's investigation of different connections beyond gender and cultural standards (Woolf, 87). Sasha's presence adds to the novel's feminist overtones and acts as a catalyst for *Orlando's* changing opinion of love and identity.

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3.4.3. Marmaduke Bonthrop Shelmerdine:

Marmaduke Bonthrop Shelmerdine is *Orlando*'s last romantic interest, deviates from traditional masculinity, he is the man who meets *Orlando* beside the lake after she has broken her ankle. *Orlando* and she fall in love and become engaged nearly immediately. When she discovers that *Orlando* is a guy, he realizes that he truly is a woman. They spend a brief period together until she goes to sail again as the winds change. She like many other characters, finds herself torn between her emotions for *Orlando* and her passion for the ocean. His character reflects a more egalitarian and accepting concept of love, which contributes to the novel's investigation of relationships beyond gender.

3.4.4. Archduchess Harriet Griselda:

Orlando falls in love with Harriet, a Romanian archduchess and the Queen's cousin. Because of her, he requests the King to send him to Constantinople. When *Orlando* arrives to England, he sees Harriet again, just to find out that she is actually a guy named Harry who wants to develop a relationship close to *Orlando*. Since *Orlando* has transformed into a woman, Harry reveals his actual gender. Harry invites *Orlando* to marry him, but *Orlando* rejects. Is one of *Orlando*'s romantic obsessions in the 18th century, is an assertive woman who defies social expectations. Her character violates traditional aristocratic and gender assumptions, reflecting Woolf's much bigger feminist views (Marcus 314).

3.5. Symbols:

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3.5.1. Clothing :

In Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, clothing represents the artificiality of gender as a social construct, and it frequently obscures one's genuine gender identity, which the novel indicates naturally varies between male and female. *Orlando*'s gender identification, as both a man and

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a woman, is communicated and portrayed by his wardrobe. After *Orlando* turns from a man to a woman, the narrator takes care to point out that nothing else about *Orlando's* look changes. "Their faces remained, as their portraits prove," the narrator says, "practically the same." when Orlando wears trousers, others regard him as a man. In contrast, when Orlando wears a dress, others regard her as a lady. Thus, the story indicates that it is Orlando's garments, rather than *Orlando's* body parts. The same is true for the novel's other characters that are pigeonholed into specific gender identities based on their clothing. For example, when *Orlando* first observes Sasha skating on the ice during the great frost, her masculine Russian clothes contribute him to believe she is a man; and when archduke Harry puts on a dress and disguises himself as archduchess Harriet, *Orlando* believes he is a woman despite the fact that he is a man. Woolf said:

"Vain trifles as they seem, clothes have, they say, more important offices than to merely keep us warm. They change our view of the world and the world's view of us." (p66).

"But there, sitting at the servants' dinner table with a tankard beside him and paper in front of him, sat a rather fat, rather shabby man, whose ruff was a thought dirty, and whose clothes were of brown. He held a pen in his hand, but he was not writing. He seemed in the act of rolling some thought up and down, to and from in his mind till it gathered shape or momentum to his liking. His eyes globed and clouded like some green stone of curious texture, were fixed. He did not see *Orlando*. For all his hurry, *Orlando* stopped dead. Was this a poet? Was he writing poetry? "Tell me," He wanted to say, "everything in the whole world"—for he had the wildest, most absurd, extravagant ideas about poets and poetry—but how speak to a man who does not see you? Who sees ogres, satyrs, perhaps the depths of the sea instead? (*Orlando* 29).

The passage went on stating, "but there, sitting at the servants' dinner table with a tankard beside him and paper in front of him, sat a rather fat, rather shabby man, whose ruff was a thought dirty, and whose clothes were of hidden brown" (Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 2). This description sets the mood for the protagonist's interaction with the stranger by emphasizing the man's unassuming demeanor and seemingly commonplace surroundings. Moreover, the section delves into the protagonist's internal dialogue and contradictory feelings as they struggle with the mystery of the stranger's identity. The protagonist's urge to interact with the guy is tempered by hesitation and self-doubt, as seen by the passage: "was this a poet?" was he composing poetry? (29).

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This inner struggle emphasizes the protagonist's passion with creation and the artistic process, while simultaneously exposing their reluctance to approach the stranger.

3.5.2. The Oak Tree :

In the novel, the Oak Tree is presented as a persistent presence in Orlando's life, acting as a metaphor of consistency in the face of change. Woolf states, "It was the oak tree, though, that most filled *Orlando* with a sense of his own identity" (*Orlando* p.112). This comment exemplifies how the oak tree serves as a steadfast anchor for *Orlando*, offering a feeling of continuity and connection to his ancestry. In addition, the oak tree symbolizes *Orlando*'s changing journey throughout the narrative. As *Orlando* experiences major shifts in identity and self-discovery, the oak tree serves as a visual metaphor for perseverance and progress. Woolf states, "The Oak was budding; *Orlando*'s fortunes were rising" (p130). This text draws a link between the oak tree's regeneration process and *Orlando*'s own journey of restoration.

Also, the Oak Tree acts as a conduit between the natural world and the sphere of human experience. Woolf said that "Under the Oak Tree, Orlando sat, lost in thought, contemplating the mysteries of existence" (*Orlando* 217). This remark underlines the Oak Tree's significance as a symbol of interconnectivity, encouraging readers to consider life's mysteries and the interdependence of all living things.

Finally, the Oak Tree in *Orlando: A Biography* functions as a multidimensional emblem, representing themes of perseverance, metamorphosis, and interconnectivity. Woolf's vivid imagery and symbolic resonance create a tale that transcends historical and physical bounds, prompting readers to ponder the everlasting riddles of the human condition.

3.5.3. The Great Forest :

The Great Forest at first appears in the story when *Orlando* begins on a voyage of exploration and self-discovery. In Woolf's book, "The Great Forest stretched out before *Orlando*, its dense foliage and towering trees hinting at the mysteries that lay within" (*Orlando* 76). According to Woolf, this first depiction paints the forest as a place of wonder and promise, representing the breadth of human experience and the endless possibilities for development and evolution.

Further, the Great Forest symbolizes the passage of time and the cyclical aspect of existence. According to Woolf, "In the midst of the Great Forest, *Orlando* had a sensation of

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timelessness, as if the borders between past, present, and future had melted" (*Orlando* 184). According to Woolf, this text highlights nature's transforming power, implying that amid the depths of the forest, *Orlando* may transcend the restrictions of linear time and embrace the natural world's timeless cycles. The Great Forest takes on a metaphorical resonance that goes beyond its literal meaning. to Woolf, "As *Orlando* emerged from the depths of the Great Forest, he felt a tremendous feeling of regeneration and rebirth, as if the forest itself had handed him a second shot at life" (*Orlando* 240). According to Woolf, this quote captures the transformational influence of the forest on *Orlando*'s trip, signifying the main character's growth and change within the novel.

The Great Forest in *Orlando* is a diverse symbol that represents themes of development, self-discovery, and the cyclical aspect of existence. Woolf's image challenges readers to take into account the huge relationship between people and the natural world, as well as the transforming potential hidden in the depths of the forest.

3.6. Exploring Fluidity: An Analysis of Themes in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*:

Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* is a densely layered novel that explores a variety of issues, many of which represent Woolf's creative methods of storytelling and progressive ideas on gender and identity. The following is an examination of some of the main themes in the novel:

3.6.1. Gender and Identity:

Woolf highlights gender as a major theme in the work. *Orlando* does not have a set gender and can go from male to female. *Orlando* observes that it is more difficult to be a female than a guy due to the constraints put on females. However, being a guy is not without flaws, as *Orlando* sees them as motivated by the need to move up the social ladder and unable to openly express their feelings. The narrator accurately portrays the distinctions between the two genders, and she does not prefer one over the other.

Orlando is a groundbreaking book that questions traditional notions of gender roles, offering a nuanced investigation of identity, fluidity, and societal expectations. Woolf's character, Orlando, deconstructs traditional concepts of masculinity and femininity, providing a complex portrayal of gender that still resonates with audiences. The main character Orlando experiences a dramatic shift throughout the narrative, turning from man to female and

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spanning decades. Woolf's trip allows her to study the flexibility of gender identity and how it is formed by cultural and historical settings. Woolf uses Orlando's experiences to highlight the limitations of binary gender understandings and how individuals may transcend standard classifications. Orlando's capacity to exist outside of conventional gender norms calls into question the concept of fixed identities, emphasizing the variety and complexity of the human condition.

Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* is a work of literature that delves deeply into the flexibility of gender roles and identities. Woolf's protagonist Orlando defies traditional concepts of masculinity and femininity, emphasizing the arbitrary nature of societal expectations. The analysis of gender roles is a major subject on the novel.

Woolf emphasizes conviction in the intrinsic flexibility of gender, implying that one's identity transcends typical binary classification. The idea that "the clothes" just conceal the actual character of one's gender goes against society standards and highlights the expressive component of gender roles. In *Orlando*, clothing is one way that gender is formed. The imaginary biographer who narrates the novel states that clothes "change our view of the world and the world's view of us," which is undoubtedly true for Orlando. When Orlando first meets Sasha, his great love from the 16th century, ice skating during the Great Frost, her "Russian fashion serve to disguise the sex," and Orlando believes Sasha is a guy. But when Sasha skates closer and Orlando can see the curve of her breasts behind her manly tunic, he realizes she is a woman. Orlando is just "interested" about Sasha when he believes she is a guy; but, when he discovers she is a woman, he falls madly in love with her. This shows that people's perceptions of others, particularly on a romantic or sexual level, are heavily impacted by social conventions regarding how men and women should portray themselves.

Woolf's novel defies traditional categorization, as Orlando undergoes a strange shift halfway through the novel, changing from male to female while maintaining their basic character. This shift acts as a spark for Woolf to question the restrictions and restraints imposed by cultural assumptions of gender as well. Woolf's portrayal of Orlando illustrates the arbitrariness of gender roles, as well as how societal norms and customs influence them. Orlando exemplifies masculine ideals in the Elizabethan era, inheriting a magnificent estate and partaking in the time's patriarchal customs. However, as the story unfolds, Orlando's gender identification grows more fluid and defies straightforward categorization. Woolf's treatment of gender roles in *Orlando* goes beyond the individual protagonist to include larger

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societal and historical factors. The novel investigates how gender interacts with other parts of identity, such as class, race, and sexuality, influencing people's experiences and chances.

Throughout the work, Woolf encourages readers to reevaluate their gender stereotypes and to acknowledge the inherent complexity and flexibility of human identity. By showing Orlando's path of self-discovery and acceptance, Woolf promotes the ability to identify oneself outside of conventional cultural standards.

The novel *Orlando: A Biography* is a nuanced examination of gender roles that challenges established boundaries and encourages readers to accept the fluidity and diversity of human identity. Woolf's transforming path reveals the liberating power of self-expression and people's ability to transcend confining gender stereotypes.

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analysis of gender roles is a major subject on the novel. One important quote that demonstrates the concept is:

"In every human being a vacillation from one sex to the other takes place, and often it is only the clothes that keep the male or female likeness, while underneath the sex is the very opposite of what it is above." (Woolf, *Orlando*, p33).

This quote emphasizes Woolf's conviction in the intrinsic flexibility of gender, implying that one's identity transcends typical binary classification. The idea that "the clothes" just conceal the actual character of one's gender goes against society standards and highlights the expressive component of gender roles. In *Orlando*, clothing is one way that gender is formed. The imaginary biographer who narrates the novel states that clothes "change our view of the world and the world's view of us," which is undoubtedly true for Orlando. When Orlando first meets Sasha, his great love from the 16th century, ice skating during the Great Frost, her "Russian fashion serve to disguise the sex," and Orlando believes Sasha is a guy. But when Sasha skates closer and Orlando can see the curve of her breasts behind her manly tunic, he realizes she is a woman. Orlando is just "interested" about Sasha when he believes she is a guy; but, when he discovers she is a woman, he falls madly in love with her. This shows that people's perceptions of others, particularly on a romantic or sexual level, are heavily impacted by social conventions regarding how men and women should portray themselves.

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3.6.2. Transgender:

In *Orlando: A Biography*, the main character's path of discovering oneself and private development revolves around the issue of transsexual identity. Woolf's hero Orlando examines the flexibility and complexity of gender identity, questioning traditional notions of masculinity and femininity.

Woolf's story moves with fluidity and intricacy, mirroring Orlando's personal journey through self-discovery and development. The tale opens with Orlando, a young lord in Elizabethan England, negotiating society's expectations and constraints based on their gender. However, halfway through the story, Orlando experiences a remarkable shift, changing from male to female while maintaining their basic personality.

This work, on the other hand, explores similar concerns by inverting the narrative of conflict with one's embodiment. Orlando doesn't start the story dissatisfied with his male identity; instead, she begins to doubt her gender after becoming female. Because of its "inverted" design, Orlando has long been dismissed as irrelevant to transgender studies. Woolf's strategy of avoiding the medical discourses on sexuality and gender of her time a maneuver that is also evident in other parts of *Orlando* places her narrative in an inverted rather than direct position with respect to the very discourse of "inversion" that Hall's novel is based on and has allowed it to be claimed for transgender studies. This succession of self-conscious refusals to attribute a reason to the most major shifts in Orlando's life represents a postmodern approach to the body and storytelling, distinguishing Woolf's work from the narratives examined by Prosser in *Second Skins*.

Orlando avoids plots in which the desire for transition or a gender presentation that contradicts mainstream societal standards is explicitly defined as the precursor to a process of change. Instead, the novel sets numerous reasons for Orlando's metamorphosis in motion

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without settling on a single narrative. Orlando rejects narrative consistency or the positing of a fundamental gender identity in order to make sense of its protagonist's subjectivity, rather focusing on multiplicity and conflict. According to Nancy Cervetti, Orlando's use of imagination challenges the fundamental assumptions of formal reality, particularly the concept of core identity (175).

Though some of her arguments are problematic because they rely on claims about transsexual essentialism based on Marjorie Garber's heavily criticized chapter on transgender people in *Vested Interests*, Cervetti's interpretation of the novel as challenging the formulation of identity as an "inside" is useful. She draws on Butler's account in *Gender Trouble* of gender as both established and subverted through the force of repetition—an argument that challenges Robert Stoller's identity notion of a "gender core" and suggests that Orlando is most closely aligned with non-identarian forms of transgender (Butler 24). Across the novel, Woolf highlights the flexibility of gender expression and how individuals may embody elements of both masculine and feminine features. Woolf adds "She...had a man's mind" (Woolf, *Orlando*, 126) stressing Orlando's complicated personality and defying established gender stereotypes.

Woolf's presentation of transgender identity in *Orlando* goes beyond the individual character and includes larger social and historical aspects. The novel investigates how gender interacts with other parts of identity, such as class, race, and sexuality, influencing people's experiences and chances.

Virginia Woolf represented Orlando's transsexual identity is marked by delicacy, empathy, and a thorough grasp of the nuances of gender. Through Orlando's experiences, Woolf addresses the psychological hardships and external hurdles experienced by transgender people as they negotiate issues of identity, self-acceptance, and expectations from society. Moreover, Woolf's story challenges typical portrayals of the transgender experience by showing Orlando's transition as a natural and seamless aspect of their journey, rather than a cause of conflict or struggle. Orlando's gender transition is shown as a freeing and uplifting experience, allowing them to completely accept their real self and find joy in their new identity.

To summarize the author's fiction encourages readers to question their own gender stereotypes and to appreciate the beauty and diversity of human identity. By praising the

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flexibility of gender presentation and questioning conventional standards, *Orlando: A Biography* is a striking monument to transgender people's perseverance, courage, and diversity, provides a comprehensive investigation of transgender identity, questioning established gender standards and asking readers to appreciate the fluidity and diversity of human experience.

3.6.3. Time:

In Virginia Woolf's novel, the notion of time is deeply woven throughout the story, showing time as subjective and changeable. Changes in society, such as monarchy and technical breakthroughs, serve as indicators of time progression. The novel questions conventional concepts of time by blurring the barriers between past and present, reality and imagination, highlighting the interdependence of memory and experience in forming one's perspective of time.

The novel's most disruptive, anachronistic component would be the main character's defiance of gender and cultural constraints, or Woolf's criticisms of high society and the literary community. However, Cleveland B. Chase's *New York Times* review of *Orlando* in October 1928 concentrates on Woolf's portrayal of time. He says, "Not that she has abandoned the stream of consciousness method, which she used with such conspicuous success in her previous novels, but with it she has combined what, for lack of a better term, we might describe as an application to writing of the Einstein theory of relativity." In this new work, she is largely preoccupied with the "time" element in character and human relationships, as well as a statement of the exact complexion of that intangible moment, a combination of past and future, of objective reality and subjective consciousness, which it refers to as the present (Mrs. Woolf Explores the "Time" Element).

While the critic believes that this approach "left the book perhaps more confused than was strictly necessary," Woolf addresses the topic of time in a very deliberate manner throughout the work. She reminds those certain hours in Orlando's life pass quickly, while others last for decades, just because of the experiences or intellectual effort that occurred during that period in time.

Orlando matures slowly, turns into a woman in middle age, and experiences a type of rebirth as a result. She continues to age even more slowly, and after over 400 years, she remains a vibrant, healthy adult lady. Woolf's decision to span such a broad period of English

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history allows the reader to examine not just the lives of men and women in England, but also the influence of different eras on the freedom and agency of women.

Woolf challenges readers to question the linearity of historical development and the stability of personal identity through Orlando's centuries-long experiences. The story encourages readers to consider how time is viewed and experienced subjectively, emphasizing the lasting nature of individual identity in the face of chronological movement.

3.7. Orlando: from Masculine to Feminine:

According to the narrator-biographer, Orland a sixteen-year-old kid of aristocratic ancestry in the "Elizabeth-period", is a trifle clumsy; a boy whose awkwardness is frequently coupled with a love of isolation, nature, and poetry. He was chosen by the Queen, granted a large estate, and appointed Treasurer and Steward. He also acts as her lover. Before the age of eighteen, he has produced a score of plays, a dozen histories, and enjoyed uncountable memories of ladies by frequenting the Whapping Old staircases and the beer gardens at night, draped in a gray cloak to conceal the star at his neck and the garter at his knee. Tired of the discomfort and rude ways of people, he exits often beer garden and once again arrives in the Court of King James, where he hailed with considerable acclamation because of his attractive youth and fortune.

He is betrothed to Euphrosyne, an aristocratic Irish girl, before having a passionate affair with Russian Princess Sasha, who compliments him for his love of creatures, gallantry, legs, and compares him to a million-candled Christmas tree. Following Sasha's disappearance on the day of the Great Flood, Orlando is exiled from the Court and has a first cataleptic fit for a week, resulting in an imprecise remembrance of his prior existence. Because of his embarrassment at Court and the severe pain of losing Sasha Orlando retreats into extreme seclusion, studies Thomas Browne, tries his hand at poetry, and swears to be the first poet of his kind, bringing everlasting shine to his name.

Nevertheless, after months of frantic effort, he decides to break his silence and invites Nicholas Greene to his home, wanting to learn more about poetry. However, he is dissatisfied with his impersonation and dismisses him by providing a quarterly pension. He is tired up to being among males. He destroys his fifty-seven lyrical works, leaving only his youthful fantasy "The Oak Tree." He also promises to write not to impress others, but for himself. In the interim, he renovates his estate and conducts a series of lavish entertainments for the

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aristocracy and gentry of the area. When he is approached by Archduchess Harriet, he recognizes he has been overwhelmed by Lust the Vulture. Then he requests King Charles to send him as an extraordinary ambassador.

On the evening he is granted Dukedom by British Admiral Sir Adrian Scrape, he has a weeklong cataleptic fit for the second time, a trance that saves his life during the Sultan rebellion. To surprise, he awakens as a woman after a weeklong slumber, showing no signs of distress about his sex change. Rustom El Sadi assists her in joining a gypsy clan, but she is unable to adjust and returns to England on a merchant ship with the assistance of Captain Bartolus. She manages legal matters concerning his/her duke ship and remains legally anonymous. She is visited by the Romanian Archduke Harry, who loses his feminine mask, and they enjoy each other's company until Harry's dignity is shattered by the realization that he has been duped by a woman in gaming. She is able to capture the attention of literary heavyweights of the day, including Pope, Dryden, and Swift. She had love encounters with both men and women before marrying Shelmerdine Marmaduke Bonthrop and having a child.

3.8. Various Genders with Same Identity:

Virginia supported her argument for the androgynous idea by examining how men and women dress in her English society. Orlando was allowed to wear Turkish jackets and pants that may be worn by both genders, according to the author (p.76). In the novel, Orlando transitions from a man to a lady and wears appropriate clothing for each gender.

Virginia stated that despite Orlando's transformation into a female, he continued to do things as a man, such as writing poetry and loving dogs. She "carefully examined the papers on the table; took such as seemed to be written in poetry; next she called her Seleuchi hound, which had never left her bed all these days ... fed and combed him" (p.76). Also, Orlando had the same courage as he was a man and when she was a woman, like when she traveled about with the gypsies, "they rode for several days and nights and met with a variety of adventures, some at the hands of men, others at the hands of nature, in all of which Orlando acquitted herself with courage" (p. 76). Orlando had features common to both genders. Although this is true, no one can claim that all males and females have the same characteristics. They share some qualities, which are relative to the personality itself.

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Virginia applied the approach to other characters in the narrative. For example, Orlando recites some poetry for Archduke Harry as "enormous tears formed in his rather prominent eyes and ran down the sandy tracts of his long and lanky cheeks" (p. 99). Traditionally, males were expected to be strong and protective of women, therefore sobbing was considered humiliating and crying for women is normal. Virginia aimed to modify readers' perceptions that men and women share emotions and passions, stating that "men cry as frequently and unreasonably as women; Orlando knew from her own experience as a man". Orlando was unaware that women should be astonished when males show emotion in their company (p. 99).

At the time, social standards prohibited men from expressing emotions in front of ladies, deeming them weak and unworthy of being labeled men. For instance, "women are not obedient, chaste, scented, and exquisitely attired by nature" (Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 86), achieving these graces, which are necessary for enjoying life's pleasures, requires rigorous practice.

Surprisingly, Orlando returns to his natural state at the end of the story. As a poet of nature, Orlando recognizes many parallels between males and females. Both genders experience problems in understanding the opposing sex. Virginia argued in the novel that men may think like women, allowing them to better understand and relate to them. However, she acknowledges that some individuals may find it challenging to implement this theory in their daily lives, which is understandable given the time it takes to change societal norms. For example, "the young men plotted her death." They said that honor required it because she did not share their ideas. However, they would have regretted cutting her neck and cheered her departure (p. 83).

3.9. Masculinity:

In *Orlando: A Biography*, the writer Virginia Woolf provides a nuanced and multidimensional analysis of masculinity, questioning traditional assumptions of male identity and applauding the multiplicity of masculine expression. Set against the backdrop of centuries of English history, the novel presents a multifaceted portrait of masculinity that resists easy categorization and encourages readers to reevaluate their gender roles.

Woolf's portrayal of masculinity in *Orlando* includes a wide range of experiences and opinions, highlighting the complexities of masculine identity. Woolf's character Orlando

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analyzes the construction and performance of masculinity, demonstrating how the norms of society and cultural standards impact individual gender manifestations.

The author's representation of masculinity includes a critical examination of established gender norms and power relations. Through Orlando's experiences as a nobleman in Elizabethan England and later as a woman navigating patriarchal society, Woolf illustrates the limitations and restraints imposed by traditional gender stereotypes. The tale challenges standard masculinity narratives by focusing on characters that break gender stereotypes and express their agency and individuality. Orlando's interactions with historical characters and fictitious equivalents reveal a wide range of male personalities, from stern and authoritative to sensitive and contemplative.

Furthermore, Woolf's examination of masculinity goes beyond individual individuals to larger concepts such as power, privilege, and vulnerability. Woolf uses Orlando's experiences as a writer and artist to illustrate the ways in which masculinity is linked to creativity, ambition, and self-expression.

The study examines masculinity through the lens of gender performativity, highlighting the changing nature of identity across time. Orlando's masculine identity is shaped by his courage and courtly demeanor, which correspond with societal norms of male behavior throughout time. However, Orlando's gender changes to female midway through the tale, demonstrating the flexible nature of gender norms and the formation of masculinity. Quotes from the text illustrate Orlando's sophisticated view of masculinity in the context of his growing identity.

Orlando's portrayal of masculinity is based on memory and tradition, furthering the notion that gender roles are cultural constructs. Furthermore, the contrast between Orlando and characters such as Nick Greene highlights the disparities between individuals who strictly cling to established gender norms and others who welcome change. Nick Greene, for example, keeps his Victorian views even as the world advances forward, whereas Orlando welcomes modernity while retaining her history.

In general, Woolf's representation of masculinity in *Orlando: A Biography* provides a comprehensive and complex look at masculine identity. Woolf challenges traditional views of

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masculinity and celebrates the multiplicity of masculine expression, encouraging readers to reevaluate their gender assumptions and embrace the depth and nuance of male identity.

3.10. Femininity:

In the novel, *Orlando: A Biography*, the author offers a comprehensive examination of femininity via the protagonist, Orlando's experiences and perspectives. Set against the backdrop of centuries of English history, the novel questions traditional concepts of gender while celebrating the variety of feminine expression. Femininity in *Orlando* is defined by its intricacy and mobility. Woolf analyzes the construction and performance of femininity via Orlando's journey, encouraging readers to contemplate the various factors and expectations that determine gender identity. One important part of Woolf's investigation of gender is her rejection of essentialist concepts of womanhood. Rather than portraying femininity as a permanent and unchangeable feature, Woolf depicts it as multidimensional and always changing. Orlando's experiences as both male and female demonstrate the flexibility of gender expression and how individuals can embrace a variety of feminine characteristics regardless of their ascribed gender.

Woolf's novel challenges established gender stereotypes while celebrating the freedom and individuality of female characters. Woolf's meetings with historical and imaginary counterparts highlight the complexity of feminine experiences and how women manage power dynamics, relationships, and cultural expectations.

Quotes from this novel give information on how femininity is portrayed in *Orlando*:

"After Orlando becomes a woman, she understands that society expects her to 'be obedient, chaste, scented, and exquisitely appareled. The only problem, Orlando maintains, is that women are none of those things naturally, and Woolf uses Orlando's transition to show how these expectations are artificial and socially constructed'" (76)

This quotation emphasizes how cultural standards of femininity place limits on women that are not natural, but rather socially manufactured.

"In Orlando's experience, being a woman 'meant conventionality, meant slavery, meant deceit, meant denying her love, fettering her limbs, pursing her lips, and restraining her tongue'—all things she is not expected to do as a man"(77).

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The quote underlines the restricted nature of cultural standards about women's conduct and looks.

Furthermore, Woolf's portrayal of femininity goes beyond specific individuals to cover greater issues like as creativity, perseverance, and self-expression. Via Orlando's experiences as a writer and artist, Woolf emphasizes the transformational potential of feminine creativity and how women reclaim their autonomy via artistic expression.

Woolf's portrayal of femininity in *Orlando* questions traditional gender roles and stresses the theatrical character of gender. Through Orlando's experiences as both man and female, Woolf attacks society rules that limit individuals depending on their gender identification. As a whole, Woolf's presenting of femininity in the novel provides a thorough and complex examination of gender identity and expression. Woolf challenges established gender stereotypes and celebrates the range of feminine experiences, encouraging readers to question their own gender preconceptions and acknowledge the beauty and complexity of feminine identity.

3.11. Significance of Exploring Gender Roles in the Novel:

Virginia Woolf's novel is a major work of literature that questions traditional gender roles and identities. Woolf enables readers to examine the fluidity and complexity of gender by following the protagonist Orlando on his journey of self-discovery and development, underlining the cultural expectations and limits that affect individual experiences. This article investigates the relevance of gender roles in *Orlando*, focusing on how Woolf's novel provides a fundamental critique of gender conventions while also opening up new avenues for understanding identity and expressing oneself.

Orlando challenges established gender standards by presenting the protagonist's fluid gender identity, which transcends binary categories of male and female. Woolf's encounters with Orlando question the concept of fixed gender norms and highlight the artistic aspect of gender. The protagonist obstacles society expectations and embraces a nonconforming identity, disrupting established power dynamics and asserting personal liberty. She criticizes patriarchal traditions and the constraints they place on individual freedom through Orlando's trip through several historical periods. The story reveals the arbitrary nature of gender divisions and demonstrates how gender standards are exploited to legitimize uneven power

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dynamics. By questioning patriarchal structures and conventions, "Orlando" promotes a more inclusive and egalitarian society in which people may express themselves without worrying about judgment or prejudice. Woolf's examination of gender in "Orlando" goes beyond a mere binary opposition, acknowledging the fluidity and complexity of gender identities. The story praises the richness of the human experience and challenges essentialist views of gender by depicting Orlando's capacity to play numerous gender roles throughout their life. By emphasizing the fluidity of gender, *Orlando* emphasizes the complexities of identity creation and the need for a deeper comprehension of gender in community.

Through the novel Orlando's path of finding oneself and strength offers a picture of escape from social restraints and expectations. The story urges readers to accept their own identities while resisting repressive gender stereotypes, instilling a sense of freedom and autonomy. By recognizing the legitimacy of many gender expressions, the novel supports a more inclusive and uplifting view of gender that values human variation and self-expression. So, the exploration of gender roles in *Orlando* is notable because of its transformational potential in questioning old conventions, criticizing patriarchal systems, and encouraging a more inclusive view of gender identity. Through Woolf's brilliant narrative and profound insights, *Orlando* continues to encourage readers to examine, reject, and rethink how gender impacts their lives and identities.

3.12. Conclusion:

To sum up everything that has been stated so far, *Orlando* is a complex tapestry of study into gender identity that challenges established binaries of femininity and masculinity. Woolf's character Orlando masterfully navigates the fluidity and complexity of gender roles, prompting readers to reevaluate their preconceived beliefs about gender and identity.

Through the novel, Woolf depicts gender as a dynamic and diverse component of human experience influenced by personal, cultural, and historical factors. Orlando's path of self-discovery and change is a lens through which Woolf investigates themes of power, agency, and the pursuit of authenticity. Woolf's tale challenges conventional gender narratives by featuring a varied cast of people that break gender conventions and expectations. Woolf celebrated the multiplicity of gender expression via Orlando's meetings with historical and mythical equivalents, challenging readers to accept the complexities of human identity.

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Finally, this novel exemplifies Woolf's inventive storytelling and devotion to examining the nuances of gender and identity. Woolf challenges established gender boundaries and celebrates the plasticity of gender expression, inviting readers to imagine a more inclusive and expanded view of human identity. She's investigation of gender and identity is still relevant and thought-provoking in today's culture, as conversations concerning these topics are evolving. *Orlando: A Biography* is a timeless reminder of the beauty and diversity of the human experience, encouraging readers to accept the depth of gender identity and appreciate the complexities of being human.



General Conclusion:

General Conclusion

Finally, *Orlando: A Biography* by Virginia Woolf delves deeply into the issue of rebuilding gender roles, questioning traditional concepts of identity and expression. Woolf uses the figure of Orlando to challenge binary conceptions of masculinity and femininity, demonstrating the flexibility and multifaceted nature of gender. Woolf argues that gender is expressive influenced by societal norms and historical situations. Orlando's centuries-long shift from man to woman represents the flux of gender identity and the constraints imposed by societal rules. *Orlando* is a major work in feminist literature, providing a visionary investigation of gender identity and the reformation of gender roles. Woolf's story continues to spark debates on gender fluidity, identity performance, and the possibility of breaking free from cultural expectations. By embracing diversity and complexity, *Orlando* inspires readers to reconsider the possibilities of selfhood and envisage a future in which gender is valued as a spectrum of identities rather than bound to rigid softwarebinaries.

The success of this research can be seen in its introduction of gender role and identity in literature and the importance of this work being in this great novel "*Orlando A Biography*". And presenting Virginia Woolf as a feminine novelist in the 20th century, and expressing about that her thought and ideas even when she suffers from mental illness and showing her influence in feminism and was all what this dissertation discussed it.

This research examines how Woolf's novel *Orlando* explores gender, transgender, and the act of creation. Woolf's work uses gender identity to demonstrate the flexibility of behavior, acts, and feelings by inventing Orlando and exploring the possibilities gender. Woolf employs these topics to raise awareness about obsolete gender conventions and ideals. The act produced and created goals serving as a counterargument to traditional laws regarding human identity. In Orlando's instance, his writing represents his character, and the novel he finally creates personifies identification. Orlando's passion of writing serves as his identity, proving that gender and sex are not acceptable modes of identification.

Furthermore, "*Orlando*" remains a seminal work in feminist fiction, challenging readers' conceptions of gender and identity. Woolf's story sparks continuing debates about the fluidity and complexities of gender roles, pushing to value variety and enjoy the breadth of life's experiences. Scholars have extensively analyzed *Orlando* in terms of gender identity, transgender and even sex making it easier to access relevant references. Finding information on the creative process was challenging due to the novel's rarity for such analysis. Secondary sources might provide a more thorough understanding of the act of creation as a method of

General Conclusion

identity. The novel was used significantly as a main source, making writing this research work more enjoyable.

Woolf's lesson is important today, encouraging readers to demolish oppressive gender standards and build spaces that affirm and empower people of all genders. Through *Orlando*, Virginia Woolf offer a picture a world in which gender is no longer constrained, allowing for more self-expression, trust, and comprehension. So, this research work does not claim to have enlightened all aspects of the novel. Further study can focus on the usage of language in connection to gender, drawing on the beliefs of renowned etymology researchers. Historical analysis of Orlando provides insight into the cultural, social, and human changes that have occurred over the past 400 years.



Appendices:

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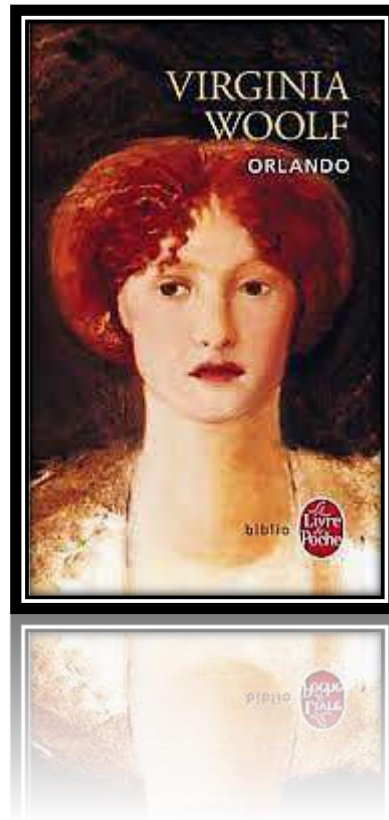
Appendix 1 : Virginia Woolf:

Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) was a well-known English writer and modernist thinker who wrote notable novels, essays, and literary criticism. Adeline Virginia Stephen was born on January 25, 1882, in London and grew up in an intellectually stimulating atmosphere. Her father, Sir Leslie Stephen, was a well-known author and editor, and her mother, Julia Prinsen Jackson, came from a family with ties to Victorian England's creative and intellectual communities. She wrote many novels, the most famous are *Mrs. Dalloway*, *Orlando*, *A Room of One's Own*.

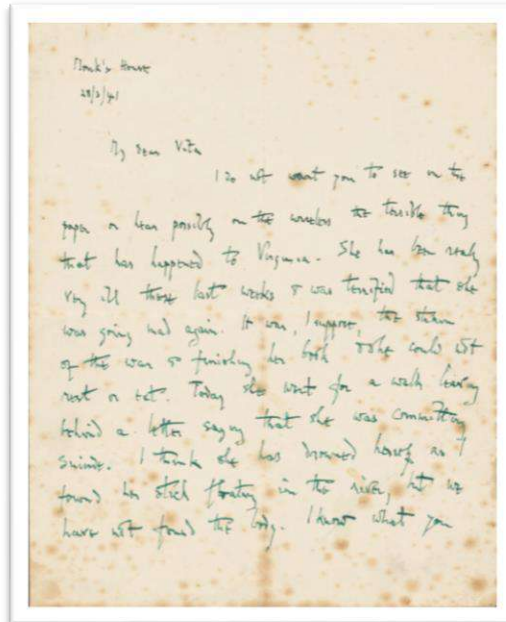


Appendix 2: The Cover of the Novel *Orlando*:

This is the cover of the novel *Orlando* there are lot of copies but this is the most famous:



Appendix 3: Letter from Leonard Woolf (1880–1969) To Vita Sackville-West (1892–1962):



Vita Sackville-West encouraged Virginia Woolf's 1928 novel *Orlando*, which examines gender and identity via the two women's close sexual bond. They stayed so nearby that Sackville-West was one of the first people Woolf's husband Leonard, told of his wife's potential suicide in 1941. He said, "[Virginia] has been seriously ill in recent weeks, and it was terrified that she was going insane again." It was most likely the pressure of the war and drafting her book [*Between the Acts*]. It suspects she drowned herself since it noticed her stick floating in the river, but it has yet to locate the body."

Appendix 4: Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, Theatre Review:



Glossary:

1. Constructionism: Constructionism is a theory that holds that many features of the social reality, such as gender, race, and class, are not inherent or natural, but rather created via social processes and interactions. In accordance to this viewpoint, knowledge and meaning are formed via interactions between individuals and their society, instead of being inherent in things or people.

2. Performativity: Judith Butler, a philosopher and gender theorist, coined the term "performativity," which implies that gender identity is established via repeated social performances or acts. Rather than being a fixed identity or essential character, gender is viewed as an ongoing process of expression through culturally and socially imposed behaviors, statements, and activities.

3. Transsexual: A transsexual is someone who has a gender identification that differs from the sex given to them at birth and frequently attempts to transition to the gender with which they identify. This transition may include medical procedures like hormone replacement therapy (HRT) or gender-affirming surgery, as well as social modifications such as changing your name, pronouns, and clothing.

4. Post-Transsexual: The phrase "post-transsexual" refers to a perspective or identity held by certain people who have transitioned from one gender to a different one and no longer identify as "transsexual." It frequently denotes a step beyond standard definitions of transsexuality, stressing fluidity and the deconstruction of binary gender norms. This notion is strongly related to postmodern and queer theories, both of which question traditional and basic gender and sexuality classifications.

5. Androgynous: refers to the mixing or combining of masculine and feminine qualities. An androgynous look or conduct may not strictly adhere to traditional gender norms and may incorporate characteristics of both genders. It frequently refers to a style, appearance, or identity that is not simply classified as masculine or female.

6. Transgender: refers to those whose gender identity or presentation varies from the sex given to them at birth. This can include persons who identify with a gender other than the one assigned to them at birth, as well as those who do not comply to established gender

conventions. Transgender people may or may not want to have medical operations to change their looks.

7.Non Identarian: The word "non-identarian" refers to a viewpoint or strategy that does not highlight or prioritize identity factors such as race, gender, sexual orientation, or nation in shaping one's beliefs or behaviors. This approach frequently focuses on universal principles or shared human experiences rather than the particulars of individual or collective identities.



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